

Pamela Temple's PARADISE



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Carolyn Parker



In her 1925 book *Rose Gardening*, English author Mary Hampden wrote that “there are scarcely any limits to the effects one may create with roses, the scenes that can be wrought with them, the nooks made, the vistas arranged, the colors blended, the canopies woven, the ground carpeted, the beds planned, the borders invented... the perfections blended into a perfect whole!”

Red Rose Ridge, Pamela Temple’s secluded hillside garden, contains all the above and more. She and her husband Michael reside on 38 acres in Willits, California. Their property faces west and has an uninterrupted view of blue, misty ridges stretching twenty miles to the Mendocino coast. Within the boundary of a metal t-post and wire deer fence, Pamela has carved two of the hillside’s acres into a progression of pathways, steps, and retaining walls that she built herself with stones from



LEFT: Early morning at Red Rose Ridge. At left are Denver’s Dream, Bob Hope, and Eden; to the right is Mozart. Photo by Carolyn Parker. ABOVE: Pamela’s founding, the “Temple HP”. Photo by Gregg Lowery.

a nearby quarry. An orchard as well as Oregon oaks, cypresses, a tricolor beech, birches, and dogwoods lend architectural support to the garden's many layers. A pergola, 52 feet long, adds linear dimension and perspective. Purchased garden arches create entryways. Pamela's octagonal art studio, topped with a gazebo, rises above it all.

Plant more than a thousand roses on such an armature and the result is a paradise of beauty, mystery, romance, passion, and love. Here, Pamela gives the rose *carte blanche* to beguile and enthrall. Roses intermingle in a sumptuous profusion, falling above you, drifting below you, tickling your cheek, catching and turning you around. Mighty rose canes form rooftops, walls, windows, doorways, and tunnels. Bloom colors blend and shock in irresistible harmony. Leaf masses, due to their sheer size, texture, and varying shades, offer peace and tranquility. The magnificent setting both weaves and exchanges views with the roses.

Within the rose walls, Pamela has created many garden sections. Among them are The Red Rose Circle, Beauty's Garden, Avenue of the Giants, and Mommy's Garden, a memorial to her mother. Sparkling lily ponds, pools, and fountains add refreshing sounds and reflections. Almost life-size statues of the goddesses Flora, Beauty, Venus, and Artemesia the Artist create an aura of seduction and enchantment. Pamela's ceramics, from plaques with rose quotations to masks of garden spirits, provide food for thought. But let's not get too serious. Teapots pour water into one pond, a fish spouts from another, and 7-foot tall rusted metal flowers poke up through perennials. Hundreds of frogs—one is ceramic and wearing a dress, another is plastic and nestled in the hand of a fairy—add humor and whimsy.

How did it all start? In 1995, Pamela and Michael married and began their adventure. The bride moved to the groom's remarkable piece of real estate. One trailer with a narrow strip of flowers, a lush vegetable garden and orchard, three rosebushes (NEW DAY plus two CHRYSLER IMPERIALS), and a deer fence were in place. Pamela, no stranger to vegetable gardening, got right to work. She soon expanded the flowerbed and planted DOUBLE DELIGHT and CLIMBING CÉCILE BRUNNER.

Then one day in 1996, Pamela saw a tiny ad in the Ukiah Daily Journal for a Mother's Day event and Antique Rose sale. Curious, she and Michael went to the sale. On an open lot crowded with huge roses blooming in three-gallon pots was The Mendocino Rose Company, with Gail Daly presiding. The roses with their exquisite names thrilled them both, and the festive air, fragrant roses, and Gail's enthusiasm entranced Pamela. They loaded their Subaru stationwagon with THE BISHOP, CHARLES DE MILLS, COMPLICATA, SOUVENIR DE LA MALMAISON, and ramblers that would shortly begin covering the boundary fence.

Until that Mother's Day, Pamela had been content to live with a few pretty roses. Now she wanted them all. The beauty, history, and romance of old roses

struck a deep chord and working with roses became a spiritual quest—her life’s work. And the garden began to take shape.

In 1997, after driving by Vintage Gardens several times, Pamela eventually realized it was a rose nursery. “Of course it was like walking into rose wonderland,” she says of her first visit. “Gregg remembers the first time he saw us there with a cart completely loaded with roses. He’d probably never seen such enthusiasm—Michael with his booming voice calling, ‘Pamela come and look at this!’ and me, quieter but equally ecstatic, saying, ‘Oh, how

RIGHT: Pamela under Climbing Gold Badge and Dr. Van Fleet.
BELOW: Mermaid, Alexander Girault, and Wedding Day.
Photos by Carolyn Parker.





LEFT AND ABOVE: Climbing Iceberg shelters the goddess Flora; The gazebo offers a view of the two-acre rose garden. Photos by Carolyn Parker. RIGHT: Asta Von Parpat. Photo by Gregg Lowery. FAR RIGHT: The Gregg Lowery rose, a seedling raised by Pamela. Photo by Pamela Temple.





LEFT: Le Rêve. Photo by Gregg Lowery. ABOVE: Entrance sign created by Carol Markell. BELOW: Raubritter. Photos by Carolyn Parker.



beautiful!’ It was such a thrill to walk in and lose ourselves in the fabulous varieties and in the beauty of the rose.”

Reading the Vintage Gardens catalogue together, Pamela and Michael found Gregg Lowery’s romantic and sometimes humorous descriptions far more exciting than glossy photos. They purchased in depth, in all rose categories. WILLIAM LOBB and HENRI MARTIN are favorite Mosses; MME. ERNEST CALVAT and MME. ISAAC PEREIRE are loved Bourbons. The garden has more than fifty huge Ramblers. And Pamela’s roses don’t have to be antiques. KNOCKOUT is as welcome as KÖNIGIN VON DÄNEMARK. And a large collection of David Austin roses receives royal treatment. LORDLY OBERON, YELLOW BUTTON, and MARY WEBB are several that are lesser known.

Because Michael loves red roses, Pamela wanted to buy them all, but 850 names appeared when she searched *helpmefind.com*. Michael told her, “You’ll never be able to take care of 850 roses.” Today, if you go to *helpmefind* and click on gardens, then search Red Rose Ridge and click on the plants grown tab, you’ll find Pamela’s list tops 1,000.

The installation of an agricultural pond 18-feet deep in 1999 made it possible to irrigate so many roses. Six weeks before the fall bloom, Pamela prunes lightly. Heavy pruning takes about four hours a day from Thanksgiving to February. The roses receive alfalfa pellets and compost in the spring. Before the rains end, Pamela tosses a slow release fertilizer called Nitroform. In the summer, the roses that are on a drip receive liquid fertilizer through an EZ-Grow system. After flushes of bloom, the rebloomers are fed with this by hand.

Pamela’s favorite time is peak bloom for she loves the color, abundance, and voluptuousness. When asked to name her favorite rose, she says, “Every rose has its day when it is perfect, and on that day it is my favorite rose.” Each spring she and Michael hold a garden party they call Rosalia, from the Roman celebration of roses. Friends and visitors gather to savor the atmosphere at Red Rose Ridge.

Pamela lives and dreams roses in an artful life filled with their limitless possibilities. She has sweet memories of growing up in the Los Altos hills, inspired by a neighbor named Georgina who spent many hours gardening each day. Georgina’s garden had a verandah, a birdfeeder, lovely fuchsias and rockroses, and a compost pile in which garbage disappeared. She would formally invite children in for cookies and fizzies. Pamela followed her about and was given cuttings of things like rose campion. Georgina’s patience made a big impact on Pamela. So did the BLAZE roses thriving outside the window of her childhood home.

“A garden’s not just dirt and plants,” Pamela explains. “It’s metaphorical, totally emotional. You know how your emotions are influenced by movies? That’s what I try to do. But I garden first for myself, for my own love of beauty. Beauty is my mission.”

CAROLYN PARKER’s roses inspired careers in garden design, photography, and writing. She lives in Lafayette, California, and is the author of two books on roses: *The Poetry of Roses* (Abrams, 1995) and *R is for Rose: Reflections from a Passionate Rose Lover* (Horticulture Books, 2005).

